

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Risky Behavior, Mate Value, and Low Mood: Is it Adaptive for Men to be Risk Takers?

STUDENT: John D. Meteer

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: December 2013

PAGES: 96

The risky behavior of males has been proposed to be a strategy to display the relative quality of men's genes and increase their competitiveness in gaining access to a mate. Low mood, a constellation of depression symptoms with less severity than to warrant a Major Depressive Disorder diagnosis, has been proposed to be an adaptive strategy to reduce harm and conserve energy in the face of competition. It is hypothesized in this study that males' strategy of gaining access to a mate through displaying risky behavior will result in higher perceptions of their own value as a mate and the value of their short-term and long-term mates. It is also hypothesized that men who engage in risky behavior to increase their competitiveness will display fewer low mood symptoms than those who do not engage in risky behavior. Two hundred forty men between the ages of 18-36 years completed decision problems assessing risk preference and aversion, the Mate Value Inventory, and the Depression-Dejection subscale of the Profile of Mood States-Short Form. The results of a MANOVA analysis suggest that there were no significant differences between risky and non-risky males on their perception of their own mate value, the value of their short-term or long-term mates, and on low mood. The discussion

focuses on the possible reasons for the pattern of responses displayed by the participants and methodological concerns.